United Nations S/2012/772

Security Council

Distr.: General
17 October 2012

Original: English

Letter dated 16 October 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and to Security Council resolution 2062 (2012), in which the Council decided to reduce the authorized military strength of UNOCI by 955 personnel as soon as practical. Following the recent attacks on civilians, peacekeepers, security forces and the political opposition, a team from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations visited Côte d'Ivoire from 17 to 22 September 2012 to reassess the security situation on the ground and to develop recommendations on the timing of implementing the reduction.

It was found that the security situation has deteriorated since the last assessment was conducted in February 2012, and more recently since my report of 29 June 2012 on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2012/506), which informed the consultations of the Council leading to the adoption of resolution 2062 (2012). Of particular concern are the attacks targeting national security forces in and around Abidjan and along the borders with Ghana and Liberia, resulting in the killing of Ivorian security personnel and assailants. It has also been reported that persons and networks affiliated with former President Gbagbo inside and outside the country are behind a number of recent attacks aimed at destabilizing the Government of President Ouattara. These attacks are no longer limited to south-western Côte d'Ivoire, or to targeting civilians. This is an important change in the security dynamic.

There have also been attacks on the headquarters of the former ruling Front populaire ivoirien party in Abidjan and an affiliated printing house, which raised security concerns among the political opposition. Since then, UNOCI has received requests from a number of political opposition representatives for protection.

I should also point out that western Côte d'Ivoire, particularly along the border with Liberia, remains the most volatile area. Cross-border attacks by armed Liberian mercenaries and Ivorian militias residing in Liberia, targeting civilians, peacekeepers or national security forces, cannot be ruled out. While some tens of thousands of Ivorian refugees are still in Liberia, there is a reported influx of people from the subregion to western Côte d'Ivoire which has further increased tensions between communities.

Furthermore, the situation in eastern Côte d'Ivoire, especially along the southern part of the border with Ghana, has deteriorated over the past months with recent attacks and a risk of a growing threat of cross-border movements.

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In the light of the deterioration in the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire as well as evolving threats, it is recommended to defer the reduction of the military strength of UNOCI until after the assessment to be conducted early in 2013 to prepare a special report to the Security Council, which will be issued by 31 March 2013.

I would be grateful if you could bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon